

Message Text

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SUBJECT: HOPES FOR EXTENSION OF IRA TRUCE

SUMMARY: LOCAL CONTACTS OF PROVO IRA EXPECT THAT THERE WILL BE A FURTHER EXTENSION OF NI TRUCE, BUT PERHAPS NOT FOR VERY LONG. DEALINGS BETWEEN PROVISIONALS AND BRITISH ARE COMPLEX, WITH MANY WOULD-BE INTERMEDIARIES. GOI APPEARS TO BE IN THE DARK ABOUT BOTH PROVO AND BRITISH INTENTIONS. FOLLOWING ARE A FEW VIGNETTES, BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSENSUS OF PROVO-WATCHERS HERE IS THT IRA WILL EXTEND ITS TRUCE BEYOND JANUARY 16 DEADLINE, BUT THAT PERMANENT PEACE IS MUCH LESS LIKELY. ACTUAL STATE OF PALY, HOWEVER, IS SURROUNDED BY EXTRAORDINARY CONFUSION. WHILE GOI APPEARS UNINFORMED, THERE ARE MANY JOURNALISTS, VOLUNTEER PEACE-MAKERS, AND CLERGYMEN WHO ARE IN SOME KIND OF CONTACT WITH PROVOS. BRITISH GOVERNMENT DENIES "NEGOTIATIONS" WITH IRA, BUT MOST PEOPLE HERE THINK THERE HAS BEEN SOME SORT OF CONTACT. THE CONFUSION HAS ONE PRECARIOUS ADVANTAGE: THE VARIOUS PARTIES TO THE IRISH TROUBLES CAN READ WHAT THEY LIKE INTO CONFLICTING CLAIMS AND RUMORS.

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2. AS SEEN FROM DUBLIN, MERLYN REES' RESPONSE TO PROVOS ON JANUARY 14 HAD TWO MAJOR ELEMENTS: A DECISION TO LET PROVISIONAL

SINN FEIN MEET BRITISH CIVIL SERVANTS, AND A CAUTIOUS COMMITMENT TO PHASE OUT INTERNMENT OVER A LONG PERIOD. THE FIRST ELEMENT -- FORMAL BRITISH CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN -- CAUSED SOME DISCOMFORT TO GOI, WHICH RESOLUTELY OPPOSES NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROVOS. (THERE IS NO CLEAR DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN SINN FEIN AND IRA.) THE RESPONSE ON INTERNMENT, HOWEVER, WAS CONSIDERED MINIMAL. THERE WAS SUSPICION THAT BRITISH HAD IN FACT GIVEN PROVOS A MORE MEANINGFUL COMMITMENT THAN THE ONE WHICH HAD BEEN MADE PUBLIC. THE SUSPICION SEEMED CONFIRMED JAN 15, WHEN 25 MORE INTERNEES WERE RELEASED, BUT THIS IS STILL CONSIDERED A VERY CAUTIOUS BRITISH RESPONSE.

3. IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS, PROVO SPOKESMEN HAVE BEEN RATTLING SABRES, ACCUSING BRITISH OF BEING UNRESPONSIVE TO PEACE OVERTURES. PROVOS HAVE DIRECTED EVEN STRONGER CRITICISM AT GOI FOR MAINTAINING ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST IRA DURING CEASE-FIRE. STRONGEST PROVO COMPLAINTS CAME WHEN POLICE MANAGED TO ARREST KEVIN MALLON, A TOP IRA LEADER. GOI PROBABLY WELCOMES PROVO CRITICISM AS EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS. LATEST DEVELOPMENT, HOWEVER, IS PRESSURE FROM SDLP AND SOME CHURCHES FOR GOI RESPONSE TO NI TRUCE. THIS MIGHT CAUSE SOME REDUCTION IN GOI PRESSURE ON PROVOS.

4. PROVO MOTIVATIONS REMAIN UNCLEAR, BUT MOST SOURCES NOW AGREE THAT IRA REALLY DOES NEED A CEASE-FIRE -- THOUGH PROBABLY NOT A LONG ONE. THEORIES VARY: SOME BELIEVE PROVOS MERELY WANT TIME TO REGROUP, OTHERS SAY MAJOR FACTOR IS PUBLIC REACTION AFTER BOMBINGS IN ENGLAND, AND STILL OTHERS BELIEVE PROVOS HAVE AT LAST REALIZED THAT NI VIOLENCE IS DEFEATING THEIR OWN WISH FOR IRISH UNITY. WHEN FULL STORY IS KNOWN, A MIXTURE OF ABOVE MAY BE INVOLVED. FOR NOW, IMPORTANT POINT IS THAT THERE IS LITTLE CONFIDENCE HERE IN PROSPECTS FOR A PROLONGED PEACE.

5. COMMENT: IN ABSENCE OF INFORMATION HERE ON BOTH PROVO AND BRITISH INTENTIONS, WE CLEARLY CANNOT VENTURE A FULL ASSESSMENT. WE DO NOT SHARE ALL OF GOI FEARS ABOUT BRITISH DEALS WITH PROVOS. WE DO WONDER, HOWEVER, WHETHER BRITISH NEEDED TO BE SO CAUTIOUS IN PHASING OUT INTERNMENT. THERE IS MUCH TO BE SAID FOR GETTING RID OF THE ALBATROSS NOW THAT THEY HAVE AN EXCUSE (HOWEVER FEEBLE) FOR DOING SO. EVEN WITH INTERNMENT OUT OF THE WAY, THERE WOULD BE VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS REMAINING FOR SETTLEMENT, BUT WE
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DOUBT THAT THERE IS MUCH LEVERAGE TO BE GAINED FROM PIECEMEAL RELEASES OF INTERNEES. MOORE

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